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# THE · SESSION · OF · THE GERMAN · REICHSTAG

ON · AUGUST · THE · FOURTH · 1914

SPEECHES · OF · ★ · THE · IMPERIAL  
CHANCELLOR · VON · BETHMANN  
HOLLWEG · ★ · DR. KAEMPF · PRESI-  
DENT · OF · THE · REICHSTAG · ★ · MR.  
HAASE · REPRESENTATIVE · OF · THE  
SOCIALIST · PARTY · ★ · . . . . .

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## FOREWORD

The Germanistic Society plans to issue a series of pamphlets to appear from time to time, dealing with the war in Europe and its underlying causes. The Society has solicited contributions from various writers and historians. The pamphlets are to serve the cause of truth, to correct misrepresentations, and to exemplify the spirit of objectivity and fair play.

Copies of these pamphlets are for sale at the office of the Society at the following prices:

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THE GERMANISTIC SOCIETY  
OF CHICAGO . . . . .  
LOUIS GUENZEL, Recording Secretary  
332 So. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.

# The Session of the German Reichstag

August Fourth, 1914

On the afternoon of August 4, 1914, occurred the memorable session of the German Reichstag, in which, without debate and in less than an hour, the war credits asked and the special legislative measures proposed by the government were passed en bloc and without one dissenting vote. The Imperial Chancellor, in a restrained but forceful speech, outlined the political situation as seen from the German point of view and gave his official version of the unsuccessful efforts made by the German government to prevent a world war from growing out of the conflict between Austria and Servia. Dr. Kaempf, the presiding officer of the Reichstag, after a patriotic speech dealing with the general situation, announced the war measures proposed by the government, consisting in credits for the expenses of the war to the amount of 5,300,000,000 marks, and in sixteen separate contingency bills designed to provide the needed financial, industrial and humanitarian relief during the period of the war. Of all the parties, only the socialists desired to be heard through their spokesman, Mr. Haase. The three readings of the proposed measures, which the law requires, were then disposed of in a few minutes, a procedure which would have been impossible if objection had been raised by even only one member. Thereupon, on motion of Dr. Spahn, the leader of the centrist party, all the credits and contingency bills were unanimously voted, en bloc, all the members present, without a single exception, rising in their seats. President Kaempf had begun the reading of the proposed legislative measures at fifteen



minutes after five; at six o'clock the Reichstag adjourned until November 24.

The following extracts contain in full the introductory address of the Chancellor and the speeches of Dr. Kaempf and Mr. Haase. The translation is based on the stenographic report of the session as it appeared in Berlin in "Der Tag" in its morning issue of August 5. There have been omitted, as being without special interest or value, those purely technical statements and motions which were necessary for the dispatch of the business of the session and, likewise, all references to scenes of enthusiastic applause frequently interrupting the speakers.

For three reasons it has been considered advisable to make these materials generally accessible:

**First:** The words of the spokesman of the socialist party prove authentically that the reports concerning the attitude of the German socialists gleefully circulated in our press were absolutely without foundation of fact. We were treated to accounts according to which the German socialists denounced the war as an unjust war of conquest or of lust of power on the part of Germany, refused to render military service, and were imprisoned and executed by an exasperated government. To be sure, during the days preceding the outbreak of the war, the socialists of all countries, not only those of Germany, left nothing undone to condemn war as incompatible with their principles, and Mr. Haase, in his notable speech in the Reichstag, does not hesitate to voice the convictions of his party. He openly condemns the imperialistic and militaristic policies of the great powers, but these words of his apply no less to Russia and England and France than to Germany. His words are fearless and carefully chosen, but even he, speaking under instructions from his party, declares the war to be one of self-defense and therefore justifiable even under the principles of a pacifistic socialism.

**Second:** The address of the Chancellor forcibly puts into

the foreground, where it belongs by all means, the Russian double-dealing during the crucial days between July 25 and August 1, a double-dealing which the English and Anglophile press has done its best to minimize and to cover up. The enemies of Germany have all reason to wish to forget it and to make others forget it. Not so Germany; nor in fact any one who desires to gain a just view of the situation. The German government and the German people have been united from the beginning in laying the blame for the outbreak of a European war at the door of Russia. The dictates of fairness and of ordinary intelligence demand, therefore, that the conduct of Russia should be looked into with at least the same degree of searching scrutiny to which every step on the part of Germany has been subjected.

**Third:** Every speech made, as well as the general attitude manifested by all the representatives of the German people at the session of August 4, prove beyond the shadow of doubt that the entire German nation has from the start stood squarely and enthusiastically behind the Emperor and his advisors. Not one word of disapproval came from any quarter in regard to the steps taken by the government. The socialists might easily have censured the government severely for not having done all in its power to prevent this disastrous war—and still have voted the necessary credits. But not one such word of protest or reproach came from their ranks. The record of this session of the Reichstag is witness that all Germany—Emperor, governments and people, all alike—were morally certain that the war was a righteous war of self-defense, forced upon Germany by Russia. An entire nation, composed of as many traditionally different elements as the German confederated states, when it speaks with absolute unanimity, is not likely to be far from the truth in regard to a question involving its very existence. Neither Russia, nor France, nor England, nor Italy has represented this impressive spectacle of absolutely unanimous conviction.

Madison, Wis., September 4, 1914.



ADDRESS OF THE IMPERIAL CHANCELLOR,  
VON BETHMANN-HOLLWEG.

A tremendous destiny has overtaken Europe. Trying to secure for our German Empire a respected position among the nations, we have, for forty-four years, lived in peace and protected the peace of Europe. In peaceful labor we have become strong and powerful, and therefore envied. Under the pretext of a Germany eager for war, enmities have been fostered and fetters forged against us in east and west. We have borne it with dogged patience. But the wind thus sown is now springing up as a whirlwind. Our desire was to continue a life of peaceful labor, and a silent vow passed from the Emperor to the youngest soldier: Only in defense of a just cause shall our sword be drawn. The day when we are compelled to draw it has come. Against our will, against our honest endeavor. Russia has put the torch to the house of Europe. We are engaged with Russia and with France in a war that has been forced upon us.

Gentlemen! A number of documents, hastily arranged amid a cataract of events, have been submitted to you. Permit me to point out to you those facts which characterize our attitude. From the first moment after the outbreak of the Austrian conflict, our aim and effort was to have this difficulty restricted to Austria-Hungary and Servia. All the ministries, especially that of England, took the same ground. Russia alone declared that it would have to have a voice in the settlement of this conflict. Thus the threatening danger of European complications raised its head. As soon as the first definite news of military preparations in Russia reached us, we sent to St. Petersburg the friendly but emphatic declaration that warlike measures and military preparations against us would force us to adopt counter-

measures, and that mobilization was not far from actual war. Russia assured us in the most friendly manner that it was not making any military preparations against us.

In the meanwhile, England was trying to mediate between Vienna and St. Petersburg and was warmly supported by us. On the 28th of July the Emperor asked the Czar by wire to consider that it was the right and duty of Austria-Hungary to protect itself from the intrigues for a Greater Serbia which were threatening to undermine its very existence. The Emperor also pointed out to the Czar the solidarity of monarchical interests menaced by such a crime as that of Sarajewo and asked him for his personal support in bringing about an understanding between Vienna and St. Petersburg. At about the same hour, before the arrival of the Emperor's message, the Czar on his part asked the Emperor's assistance, urging him to advise moderation in Vienna. The Emperor promised to mediate; but scarcely had the first steps ordered by him been taken when Russia began to mobilize all of its forces against Austria-Hungary. Austria-Hungary, however, had mobilized only those of its army corps that were directed immediately against Serbia and only two army corps in the north and these far from the Russian frontier. The Emperor immediately pointed out to the Czar that this mobilization of the entire army against Austria-Hungary must render difficult, if not impossible, the mediating efforts which he was making at the Czar's request. Nevertheless, we continued in Vienna our endeavors of mediation, and in terms which went to the utmost of what was compatible with our treaty relation with Austria. During this time, Russia, of its own accord, renewed its assurance that it was not making any military preparations against us.

Thus came the 31st of July. In Vienna a decision was to be reached. Through our representations we then had succeeded in inducing Vienna to reopen a direct exchange of views with St. Petersburg with which communication had been discon-

tinued some time previous. But before a last decision was made in Vienna the news came that Russia was mobilizing its entire army—hence, also against us. The Russian government knew from our repeated representations what mobilization on our frontier meant; but neither did they notify us of this mobilization, nor did they give us any explanation concerning it. Not until the afternoon of July 31st, did the Emperor receive a telegram in which the Czar pledged himself that his army was not taking any provocative attitude toward us. But the mobilization against us on the Russian frontier was already well under way in the night of July 30. While we, at Russia's request, were mediating in Vienna, the Russian army was rising to strike on our long Eastern frontier which is almost wholly undefended. Meanwhile France, although it did not yet mobilize, by its own admission was making military preparations.

And we? Up to that moment we had purposely not called in a single reservist, for the sake of the peace of Europe. Should we now continue to wait in patience? To wait until the powers between which we are wedged in should choose the moment for dealing the first blow? To expose Germany to that danger would have been a crime. Therefore, on this very 31st of July, we demanded of Russia that it countermand its mobilization, as the sole measure which was still able to preserve the European peace. Further, the German ambassador in St. Petersburg was instructed to inform the Russian government that in case our request was refused, we should have to consider that a state of war existed between Russia and Germany. The German ambassador carried out his instructions. What answer Russia made to our request we do not know to this day. No telegraphic communications have reached us on this point, although the wires continued to bring us messages of far less importance. Thus, at five o'clock on the afternoon of August 1st, when the time set for a reply had long passed, the Emperor saw himself forced to mobilize our army.



At the same time we had to make sure of the attitude which France would assume. We addressed to it the definite inquiry whether in an eventual German-Russian war it would remain neutral. In reply France said it would do what its interests demanded. That was an evasive, if not a negative reply to our inquiry. Nevertheless the Emperor gave orders that the French frontier should not be violated under any circumstances. This order was strictly obeyed except in one single instance. France, which had begun mobilizing at the same hour as we, declared that it would respect a frontier zone of ten kilometers. And what took place in reality? Bomb-throwing airmen, cavalry patrols, companies crossing the frontier of Alsace-Lorraine—through such means France attacked our territory. As regards the one exception to which I have referred, I have received the following report from the chief of the general staff:

“Of French complaints of violations of the frontier on our part only one has been received. Contrary to express orders, a patrol of the fourteenth corps, apparently under command of an officer, crossed the frontier on August 2d. It seems to have been picked off; only one man has returned. But long before this single crossing of the frontier took place on our part, French airmen threw bombs as far as Southern Germany, and at the Schlucht-Pass French troops attacked the troops guarding our frontier. Our troops thus far have entirely confined themselves to guarding the frontier.”

This is the report of the chief of the general staff.

We are now acting in self-defense, and necessity knows no law. Our troops have occupied Luxemburg and perhaps have already been obliged to cross the Belgian frontier. This action violates international law. The French government, it is true, has declared in Brussels that it would respect the neutrality of Belgium as long as the enemy would respect it. But we knew

that France stood ready to invade. France could afford to wait, not we. A French attack upon our flank in the district of the lower Rhine might have become disastrous. Thus we have been forced to disregard the protests of the governments of Luxemburg and Belgium. The wrong which we thus commit we shall try to make good as soon as our military aim is attained. Whoever, like us, is fighting a supreme fight, must think only of forcing his way through.

Gentlemen! We are standing shoulder to shoulder with Austria. As concerns the attitude of England, the declarations which Sir Edward Grey made yesterday in the House of Commons have made clear the position which the English government takes. We have declared to the English government that as long as England remains neutral, our fleet would not attack the northern coast of France, and that we shall not violate the territorial integrity and independence of Belgium. This declaration I herewith repeat before the entire world. I may add that as long as England remains neutral, we are further prepared not to undertake hostile operations against the French merchant marine in case that France promises the same.

Gentlemen! This is what has happened. I repeat the words of the Emperor: With a clear conscience Germany goes into this war. We fight for the fruits of our peaceful labor, for the inheritance of a great past, for our future. The fifty years have not yet passed of which Moltke said that we should have to be in arms to defend the inheritance and advantages gained in 1870. Now the great hour of trial has come for our people, but we face it with hopeful confidence. Our army is in the field; our fleet is ready to do battle; behind them stands the entire German people. The entire German people! You, gentlemen, know your duty in its full significance. The proposed legislation needs no further justification. I beg that it be passed promptly.

## THE SPEECH OF DR. KAEMPF, PRESIDENT OF THE REICHSTAG.

Gentlemen! The seriousness of the situation, as to which no one among us can have deceived himself, has found expression in its full extent and with all its weight in the words of the Imperial Chancellor. We see ourselves faced by powerful enemies who threaten us on the right and on the left, who without declaration of war have invaded our territory, and who have forced upon us a war for the defense of our country. We are conscious that the war into which we are forced to go is a defensive war; but at the same time it is for Germany a war for the highest spiritual and material possessions of the nation, a war of life and death, a war for our united national existence. The moment in which the Reichstag, in view of the outbreak of the war, prepares to vote those laws which are to establish the secure foundations for the war itself and for the economic life of the nation, is a solemn and profoundly serious one, but at the same time an unspeakably great and exalting one. Heavy burdens must be placed upon the entire people, heavy sacrifices must be demanded of the individual. But there is no one in the whole German Empire who does not fully understand what is at stake, and who does not cheerfully take upon himself these burdens, is not cheerfully ready to make these sacrifices to the fatherland. The enthusiasm which sweeps like a storm through all the land is our witness that the entire German people are resolved to sacrifice life and property for the honor of their country. Never have our people stood together more unitedly than to-day. Even those who on principle are declared opponents of war hasten to the colors. Their representatives in the Reichstag are willing to grant without delay the means necessary for the defense of the country. Thus the people in their entirety stake their lives for the expiation of the wrong done us and for our defense in a war forced upon us. In this we know we are at one with the governments of all the German states. All of us, governments



and people, have but one thought: the honor, well-being, and greatness of Germany. Thus the people in arms, conscious of their strength, go into this holy war, old and young, filled with the same enthusiasm. From the eyes of our brothers and sons gleams the old German battle-courage. Joyously certain of victory we see those in command of our army and navy at their mighty task. The strength of our people in arms, the excellent leadership of our army and navy assure us of victory in this war which we are waging in the consciousness of a just cause for the defense of the honor and greatness of our fatherland.

After an interruption of an hour and a quarter, the session was resumed, President Kaempf announcing the various contingency measures proposed by the Government. No one desired to speak on them except Mr. Haase of Koenigsberg, acting as the spokesman of his party, the social democrats.

### **THE SPEECH OF MR. HUGO HAASE OF KOENIGSBERG, MEMBER OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY.**

Under instructions from my party I have to make the following statement. We stand before a fateful hour. The consequences of imperialistic policies, through which an era of competitive armaments was ushered in and the antagonism between the nations intensified, have swept over Europe like a tidal wave. The responsibility for all this rests upon those who uphold these policies. We refuse to share it. The socialists have fought against this ominous development with all their might, and to the last they have endeavored to secure peace through impressive demonstrations in all countries, especially in cordial agreement with our brothers in France. Their efforts have been in vain. Now we stand face to face with the grim fact of war. We are threatened by the horrors of hostile invasion. Neither for nor against the war have we to decide to-day, but solely on the means necessary for the defense of the country. To-day we must think of the millions of our fellow-countrymen who, without guilt of their own, have been drawn into this doom.

They will be hardest hit by the devastation of the war. Our fervent wishes accompany our brothers who have been called to the colors, without difference of party. We also think of the mothers who must surrender their sons, and of the women and children who are deprived of husband and father and who, in addition to the anxiety for their beloved ones, are threatened by the terrors of hunger. Furthermore, there will soon be tens of thousands of wounded and mutilated soldiers. To help all of these, to lighten their lot, to alleviate all this untold distress—this we consider a compelling duty.

For our people and its future liberty much, if not all, is at stake, should victory be on the side of Russian despotism sullied with the blood of the best of its own people. It is necessary to ward off this danger, to render secure the civilization and independence of our own country. Under these circumstances we carry out what we have always maintained—in the hour of danger we do not leave the fatherland in the lurch. In so doing we feel in agreement with the international socialistic union, which at all times has recognized the rightful claim of every people to national independence and self-defense, just as we feel in agreement with it in condemning every war of conquest.

We demand that as soon as the goal of self-protection shall be attained and our enemies be inclined toward peace, the war be ended by a treaty which shall render possible friendly relations with the peoples that are our neighbors. We make this demand not only in the interest of that international solidarity for which we have always stood, but also in the interest of the German people themselves. We hope that the cruel school of the sufferings of war will awaken in additional millions the abhorrence of war and win them over to the ideal of socialism and of peace among nations. Guided by these principles we are willing to vote the credits asked for.

Within a few minutes, without further speeches, the Reichstag went through the formalities necessary for reaching a final vote on all the proposed measures en bloc. The vote has been described in the introductory statement. Finally, before announcing the adjournment of the Reichstag until November, the Chancellor spoke the following words:

Gentlemen! At the close of this brief but solemn session, one more brief word. It is not the great importance of your decisions which gives this session its significance, but the spirit which prompted you to make them—the spirit of a unified Germany, the spirit of unconditioned and unreserved mutual confidence, even unto death. Let the future bring us what it may, the Fourth of August, 1914, will be to all eternity one of the greatest days of Germany.







